DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 622 SP 036 259

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TITLE A Qualitative Case Study of Teacher-Student Micropolitical Interaction: The Strategies, Goals, and Consequences of Student Resistance.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 47p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Aggression; *Behavior Problems; Case Studies; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; Qualitative Research; Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Micropolitics; *Passive Aggressive Behavior

ABSTRACT

This report examines part of a qualitative study on the micropolitical classroom strategies, goals, and consequences that occur among the students and a teacher in an elementary classroom. The paper focuses on the students' micropolitical strategies and goals, and the resulting consequences on their classroom teacher. Micropolitics describes the ways in which individuals attempt to influence others through both cooperative and conflictive strategies. Analysis of the data, gathered through participant observation and interviews, revealed two subcategories of student micropolitical influence: passive resistance and aggressive resistance. Passive resistance--repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, and partial compliance--is less direct and less confrontational than aggressive resistance which includes overt protests and use of intermediaries. The goal of passive resistance is to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities that students dislike but are not willing to risk punishment to prevent; aggressive resistance is used without regard to the risks of punishment. While student resistance can provide feedback to help teachers better meet student needs, aggressive resistance can cause teachers to feel professional incompetence, personal discouragement, job dissatisfaction, and fatigue. Findings suggest that teachers should be prepared to operate in a dynamic and highly micropolitical classroom. Teachers should also be aware of how their actions reinforce certain student micropolitical behaviors, develop a deep awareness of their own political strategies and goals, and understand how their strategies and goals affect students and influence teaching and learning. Recommendations for university teacher education programs include providing opportunities for teachers, both preservice and inservice, to develop micropolitical knowledge and to confront their own micropolitical behavior and analyze that of others. (Contains 39 references.) (ND)

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A Qualitative Case Study of Teacher-Student Micropolitical Interaction: The Strategies, Goals, and Consequences of Student Resistance

Paper Presented at the
American Educational Research Association Annual Conference
April 18-22, 1995
San Francisco, CA

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A Qualitative Case Study of Teacher-Student Micropolitical Interaction: The Strategies, Goals, and Consequences of Student Resistance

Introduction

The early work in micropolitics began as a direct challenge to popular apolitical models of organization such as those developed by Fayol (1949), Taylor (1947), and Weber (1947). Leading this challenge were early political theorists, such as Burns (1961), Cyert and March (1963), Pettigrew (1973), and Strauss (1962) all who express a dissatisfaction with apolitical models of organizations. Their dissatisfaction concerns such tenets of apolitical models as division of labor, allocation of resources and incentives, and hierarchical task specialization that apolitical models espoused to prevent political activity and to ensure organizational consensus. Early political theorists such as Burns (1961), Cyert and March (1963), Pettigrew (1973), and Strauss (1962) challenged apolitical models of organization with their own political models of organization. Political models developed by these early political theorists maintain that the tenets of apolitical models (such as, division of labor, allocation or resources, and hierarchical task specialization) do not prevent political activity and do not ensure organizational consensus. Instead, Burns (1961), Cyert and March (1963), Pettigrew (1973), and Strauss acknowledge that these tenets actually create political competition, coalitions, and conflict within organizations. In addition, these political theorists recognize organizations to be heavily involved in political activity through a context of organizational decision making, power and authority structures, disparate goals, and resource allocations. Furthermore, these early theorists reveal that members of organizations use political strategies such as coalition building and political exchange to achieve their organizational and personal goals. The micropolitical perspective evolved from the work of these early political theorists.

Iannoccone (1975), an educational researcher, became the first to study micropolitics in an educational context. According to Iannoccone (1975) and other educational researchers (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Bacharach & Mitchell, 1987), schools should be recognized and understood as political entities where school members (that is, individuals and groups) develop micropolitical strategies in an attempt to achieve their own personal and school goals. In addition, Bacharach and Lawler (1980) and Bacharach and Mitchell (1987) acknowledge that school members often form shared objectives and micropolitical strategies with other school members (i.e., coalitions) in order to achieve successful and preferred decision outcomes.

Other educational researchers began to apply the developing micropolitical perspective to educational contexts. For example, Gronn (1986) and Hoyle (1987) reveal that school personnel

use both sanctioned and nonsanctioned, and overt and covert micropolitical strategies within school organizations. In addition, Ball (1987) reveals that a group's use of micropolitical influence is more powerful than an individual's use of micropolitical influence. Furthermore, Ball (1987) emphasizes the prevalent existence of micropolitical strategies of conflict as opposed to micropolitical strategies of cooperation.

Unlike Ball (1987), Blase (1991a) in his work in educational micropolitics, acknowledges that micropolitical strategies of cooperation as well as micropolitical strategies of conflict exist within schools. In addition, Blase (1991a) finds that organizational and community factors significantly shape school micropolitics. Furthermore, he finds that school members use micropolitical strategies for purposes of both protection and influence.

To pull together the various developing perspectives in the rapidly growing field of micropolitics, Blase (1991a), developed a broad-based, working definition of micropolitics. He writes:

> Micropolitics is the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and to protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously or unconsciously motivated, may have political significance in a given situation. Furthermore, both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. (p. 11)

Blase (1991a) bases his definition of micropolitics on the developing micropolitical perspective I mention in the proceeding introductory section.

The majority of micropolitical studies completed in education focus on the teacher-principal relationship. The literature reveals that principals do develop a micropolitical perspective toward teachers, and teachers do develop a micropolitical perspective toward principals. Furthermore, the principal's micropolitical behavior results in either negative or positive consequences for teachers depending on the strategy of micropolitical influence the principal uses. For example, principals' micropolitical control strategies of authoritarianism, control of decision making, coercion, and favoritism link to decreases in loyalty, motivation, risk taking, and commitment of teachers (Ball, 1987; Ball & Bowe, 1991; Blase, 1991a, 1990; Radnor, 1990; Spaulding, 1994a, 1994b). Principals' micropolitical strategies of praise, expectation, involvement, support, and moral influence link to increases in teacher self-esteem, confidence, sensitivity to student needs, and job satisfaction.

A review of the literature reveals that although numerous micropolitical studies concerning the principal-teacher relationship have been completed, only two micropolitical studies focus on the teacher-student micropolitical relationship (Blase, 1991b; Bloome & Willett, 1991). Blase (1991b) conducted a study in a high school setting and focused on the micropolitical behavior of teachers toward their students. Bloome and Willett (1991) conducted a

study in a first-grade classroom with limited English-speaking students and focused on the micropolitical interaction that occur between students and their teacher during reading lessons.

What Blase (1991b) and Bloome and Willett (1991) reveal through their micropolitical teacher-student studies is that (1) students and teachers develop a micropolitical perspective toward each other in order to achieve their own personal goals, (2) students and teachers use goal-directed micropolitical strategies to achieve their personal goals, and (3) students' and teachers' micropolitical strategies have political consequences, either negative or positive, for themselves and others. It is from this literature background that I developed this study of student and teacher micropolitical interaction in an elementary classroom.

The limited number of micropolitical studies that focus on the teacher-student relationship may be the result of the relative newness of the field. Micropolitics as a field of study is still in its infancy. My present research presents one of the first attempts to apply the micropolitical perspective to an elementary classroom setting.

Description of the Study

Research Purpose

The broad focus of this study can be stated as the question: What are the micropolitics of the elementary classroom? My purpose for conducting this study was to discover and examine micropolitical interaction in one elementary classroom. In doing so, I was able to examine the micropolitical classroom strategies, goals, and consequences that occur among students and a teacher in an elementary classroom. Because of the extremely large data base (i.e., based on an in-depth year long qualitative case study), this paper reports only on the students' micropolitical strategies and goals, and the consequences of their strategies on their classroom teacher.

Guiding Research Questions

Guiding this qualitative, grounded theory case study of micropolitical classroom interaction are three questions: (1) What micropolitical strategies are being used by students in the elementary classroom? (2) What goals do the students have for engaging in micropolitical strategies? and (3) What are the consequences of the students' micropolitical strategies for the classroom teacher? These open-ended and process oriented type questions are typical of grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are essential ones in the guiding research questions. Micropolitics describes the ways in which individuals attempt to influence others through both cooperative and

conflictive strategies in order to attain desired goals (Blase, 1991a). Micropolitical strategies refer to the actions or behaviors that students use to carry out their influence and to accomplish their micropolitical goals (Blase, 1991a; Lofland, 1976). Micropolitical goals are the desired ends or aims pursued by the students that resulted from their individual interests, values, needs, preferences, beliefs, motivations, or purposes (Blase, 1991a)). Micropolitical consequences refer to the end results or effects obtained by the students' micropolitical strategies (Spaulding, 1994c). These definitions provide the conceptual foundation for the study.

Site and Sample Selection

I chose a private, elementary school for the site of this research. The school, located in a suburban city within the South-Central region of the United States, is affiliated with an Episcopalian Church and accredited through the regional and national association of Episcopalian schools. With a yearly per student tuition rate of $3,400.00, the school tends to serve the students of upper income families who can financially afford a private school education for their children. The school serves students in pre kindergarten through eighth grade and has an enrollment of 400. The school principal made the decision as to the particular classroom in which I conducted my research. Based on her knowledge of my research purposes and the teaching personnel in her school, she chose a second grade classroom for my research.

I chose a private school as the site of my research because of my interest in private school education. In addition, several other factors impacted my choice of research site. For one, the classroom teacher and school principal eagerly agreed to participate in the research from the initial contact. For another, I was given permission to interview and interact with the students and teacher either individually or collectively as I needed. This meant that I had access to a purposive sample that included one second grade teacher and all of her second grade students.

Specifically, the research sample includes one female, Caucasian elementary teacher with 15 years teaching experience and eighteen students (i.e., nine boys and nine girls). All eighteen students are Caucasian and from upper income homes. The teacher and principal both describe the parents of the students as highly educated and professional. For example, four parents are medical doctors, four are local business owners, one is a national corporation executive, two are lawyers, and one is a state senator.

Research Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism, described by Blumer (1969), provided the theoretical framework for this study. Symbolic interactionism rests on three major premises discussed by

Blumer (1969): (1) People act toward things and other people based on the meanings these things have for them; (2) meanings are social products that arise during social interaction; and (3) people attach meanings to other people, objects, situations, and events through a process of social interpretation. Symbolic interactionism allowed me to study the process through which the students and teacher in the study created meanings and interacted, through the use of micropolitical strategies, with each other on the basis of these meanings.

Data Collection Procedures

I selected data collection procedures according to their ability to inform an explanation of the empirical world form a symbolic interactionist perspective. I guided my data collection with the three aforementioned guiding research questions. Data collection procedures for the study included participant observation and interviews. Participant observation is the conventional name given to data collection that involves social interaction between the researcher and the informants in a naturalistic setting during which data are systematically collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Participant observation is appropriate for observing what Blumer refers to in his second premise as, "the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (1969, p. 2). While meaning itself cannot be observed through the procedure of participant observation, it was possible for me to use participant observation to observe social interactions that contributed to the micropolitics of the classroom.

During this 9 month study, I employed interviews in conjunction with participant observation (Strauss 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that an interview is a purposeful conversation used to produce rich, descriptive data about how participants interpret their world. I selected interviewing to reveal "the meanings that individuals had for things and people" (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). The interplay between interviews and participant observation is reciprocal. By this I mean, interviews provided clues as to what my focus should be in future occasions of participant observation. Furthermore, because it was not possible for me to observe all the social interactions that influenced the micropolitics of the classroom, it was necessary to use interviewing to ask about them. (See Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Wax, 1971.) Most importantly, interviews provided opportunities for me to probe for teacher and student meanings about events and actions I observed during participant observation.

I used a research notebook during my study in order to deposit and organize my field notes (i.e., the data I was collecting from participant observation and interviews). In addition, I used the notebook to keep track of researcher memos (i.e., ideas about research categories and their relationships discovered during coding), observer comments (i.e., records of my feelings,

interpretations, preconceptions, and biases), and methodological questions (i.e., data collecting, coding, and analysis questions) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Data Analysis

I used grounded theory method for collecting, coding, and analyzing the data I attained from the second grade classroom where my research took place. Guided by grounded theory, the data were "inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represented (i.e., a second grade classroom). . . and were verified through systematic data collection and analysis of the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). In other words, data collection and analysis stood in a reciprocal relationship with one another (i.e., data collection led to analysis, and analysis led to further data collection). This process of constantly switching back and forth between data collection and analysis is referred to as the constant comparative process of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Glaser & Strauss (1967), in describing the constant comparative process of grounded theory, note that it has two functions: (1) a procedure for analyzing data, and (2) a means for generating theory.

I conducted data analysis by searching line by line through my written up field notes for units of data, called incidents, that served as the basis for defining categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Incidents are the smallest concrete units about a topic that can stand alone. I analyzed my field notes line by line in order to locate micropolitical incidents. Once I located an incident in the field notes, I entered it into a computer file using a simple word processing program. I coded each file in multiple ways: the data collection method (e.g., interview or participant observation), the source of the incident (e.g., the name of the research participant), the location of the incident (e.g., the page number of the field notes), and the title of the incident underlined (e.g., interruption). An example of an incident computer entry follows: Interview--student/Welsley--#161-162--Use of interruption to influence the teacher.

I identified seven main student incidents in my field notes. I identified these incident types over 245 times in my field notes. By looking at each incident's similarities and differences, I grouped the seven incidents into a category set that contained two subcategories and one main category (see Figure 1.1: Category Set). Subcategories of the category of **student resistance** include: passive resistance (i.e., incidents = repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, partial compliance) and aggressive resistance (i.e., incidents = protesting, intermediaries).

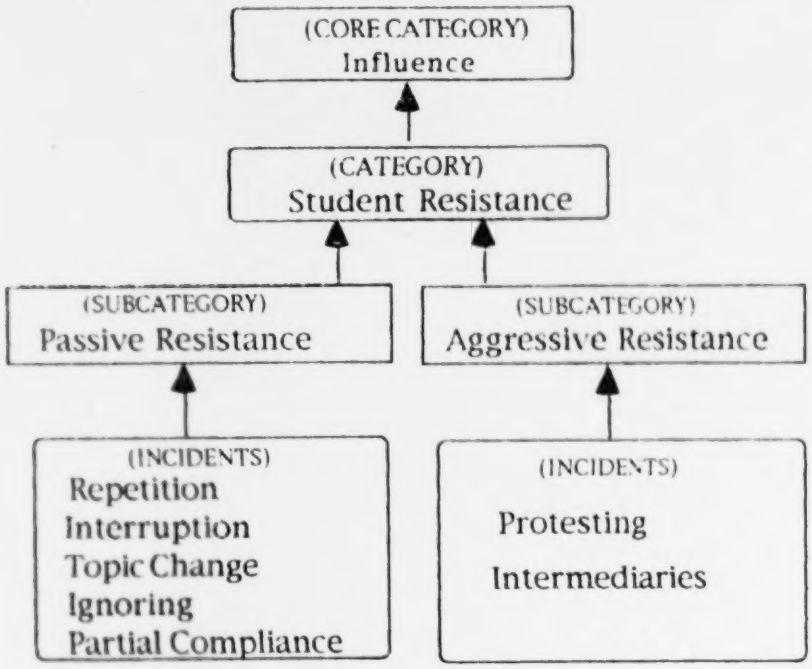

FIGURE 1.1 CATEGORY SET

According to the constant comparative process of grounded theory, I built relationships between the main category and subcategories to form a core category (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987) (see Figure 1.1). A core category is the central category around which all categories and subcategories are integrated. I identified influence as the core category of my research. Influence was the common thread connecting all micropolitcal activity in the classroom. In the context of my research findings, I found micropolitics to focus on the strategic use of influence by the students to achieve their goals in the classroom. Defined, influence refers to the act of impacting or swaying another toward one's own personal goals.

Credibility of the Research and Findings

Credibility is an umbrella term that includes criteria for judging the adequacy of a study's research process and findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The following section summarizes the credibility criteria I used during my research.

Grounded theory methods provided me with opportunities for continual data analysis and comparison in order to make credible the match between my categories and the research

participant's perspectives (i.e., the teacher and students). For example, through the use of the constant comparative process of grounded theory, I was able to continually adjust my data collection and analysis to ensure my data's fit, work, and relevance to the emerging theory. Fit, work, and relevance are three credibility techniques indigenous to grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Fit means my categories are applicable to the research setting and directly derived from my data. Work is the ability of my findings to explain the actions under study, and relevance means my categories are meaningfully relevant to the research setting. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the concepts of fit, work, and relevance are essential criteria for judging whether a study can be considered grounded and is therefore credible.

In addition to the fit, work, and relevance of grounded theory for achieving credibility, I used other criteria to further promote the credibility of my research. These criteria include: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

Prolonged engagement is the investment of sufficient time to achieve the purposes of learning the setting, testing for misinformation, and building trust. To accomplish prolonged engagement, I spent an entire school year (i.e., nine months) in my research site. Persistent observation, as another technique for promoting credibility, allowed me to "identify those characteristics and elements in the setting that are most relevant to the question being pursued and focus on them in detail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). In contrast to prolonged engagement, which provided scope to my study, persistent observation provided depth. By depth, I mean that I continued observations until saturation occurred. By saturation, I mean that continued data collection failed to turn up new incident types. As a result of persistent observation, I avoided premature closure of my research.

Triangulation is another technique I used to achieve credibility in my study. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data, multiple settings, and multiple methods of data collection to support emerging research themes and to explain my research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the case of my study, I triangulated multiple sources of data (i.e., 19 classroom members), multiple classroom settings (i.e., observing different classroom times, events, and activities), and multiple methods of data collection (i.e., participant observation and interviews). I also used peer debriefing and member checks to promote the credibility of the study. Peer debriefing is a process of communicating to a peer for the purpose of exploring aspects of the study that might otherwise remain only implicit within the researcher's mind (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) allowed the students and the teacher of my classroom study to provide me with feedback on my findings. Member checking provided the opportunity to assess intentionally (i.e., what the participant intended by acting in certain ways).

In addition, member checking also put the research participants on record for the accuracy of their inferred statements and the reasonableness of my interpretations and conclusions.

Findings: The Strategies, Goals, and Consequences of Student Micropolitical Resistance in the Classroom

Category of Student Resistance

Introduction

I found students to use micropolitical influence to both passively and aggressively resist their classroom teacher. Student resistance, as a micropolitical category of influence, is an act or instance of opposing or retarding an undesirable force (e.g., the classroom teacher). Students use of resistance focuses on the actions of the teacher and the preferences (i.e., likes and dislikes) of the students. According to Cusick (1993, 1992), Johnson (1985), Pauly (1991), and Willis (1977), students are able to exert a tremendous amount of influence upon the teacher by choosing either to resist or to cooperate with the teacher. For example, according to Pauly (1991), students may decide whether to resist or to cooperate with the teacher depending upon the degree of compatibility between student and teacher goals.

The culminating goal of student resistance, as discovered in the data and corroborated by students, is to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities and instruction that students dislike. Students have varying reasons for disliking an activity. For example, the data reveals that students often dislike an activity because they find it difficult, uninteresting, or uncomprehensible. Students also dislike an activity based on a lack of challenge presented by the activity. Regardless of the specific reasons behind their dislike of an activity, students use micropolitical strategies to avoid the activities they dislike. According to Cusick (1992) and Pauly (1991), students resist activities they dislike and in doing so affect a teacher's academic presentation method, often resulting in instructional delays, modifications, and even the prevention of instruction. I found two subcategories of student micropolitical resistance in the data. These include passive student resistance and aggressive student resistance.

I discuss the subcategories of student resistance in three ways. First, I thoroughly define and describe each subcategory in terms of the specific micropolitical strategies (i.e., coded as incidents) that students use to influence their teacher. As a reminder, micropolitical strategies are the actions individuals take to obtain their micropolitical goals.

Secondly, after defining and discussing all the micropolitical strategies of a subcategory, I discuss student goals (revealed in student interviews) for engaging in the micropolitical strategies of passive resistance and aggressive resistance. As previously mentioned, micropolitical goals are the desired ends or aims pursued by an individual(s) that may result from individual interests, values, needs, ideologies, preferences, beliefs, motivations, or purposes (Blase, 1991a).

Thirdly, after completely discussing both subcategories in terms of student resistance micropolitical strategies and goals, I will discuss the consequences of the students' micropolitical strategies and goals on their teacher (as identified by the teacher). Consequences are the end results or effects obtained by using a micropolitical strategy.

I use excerpts from my field notes throughout the section to illustrate each student micropolitical resistant strategy and to give voice and context to teacher and student statements. The excerpts are each numbered according to their location in my field notes (i.e., #52). I use teacher and student pseudonyms for anonymity purposes. For example, I use the name, Mrs. Cole, as a pseudonym for the classroom teacher.

Subcategory of Micropolitical Resistance:
Student Passive Resistance

The first subcategory of student micropolitical influence I find in the data is passive resistance. Students use passive resistance, as well as aggressive resistance, to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities or instruction that they dislike. As compared to the student subcategory of aggressive resistance (to be discussed next), I found passive resistance strategies to be less direct and less confrontational.

In addition, my research reveals that students are more likely to use micropolitical strategies of passive resistance than micropolitcal strategies of aggressive resistance. I found two major reasons for students' preferences toward passive micropolitical strategies. First, students generally think passive micropolitical strategies of resistance work effectively in achieving their goals. Second, passive micropolitical strategies of resistance conform to student role expectations. Students, through both past and present experiences, are socialized to behave as compliers in the classroom; therefore, students perceive passive micropolitical strategies to be a more temperate and restrained way to show resistance. Passive micropolitical resistance strategies include: repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, and partial compliance.

Repetition

I find students use repetition as a micropolitical strategy of passive resistance. Student describe repetition as student statements and questions directed to Mrs. Cole (i.e., teacher

pseudonym) requesting that she repeat instructions or explanations. According to students, they use tedious repetition to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher instruction that they dislike.

According to my field notes, students use excessive and tedious questioning to get Mrs. Cole to repeat her instructions or directions. Excessive questioning by students delays and distracts Mrs. Cole's instruction. In the following field note excerpt, I provide an example of students use of repetition as a micropolitical strategy.

> The students are in reading circle:
> Mrs. Cole: "I want everyone with blue on to read together. . .SHHHH" [The students are talking among themselves.]
>
> Mike: "Mrs. Cole, I have some blue in my shoe, does that count?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Yes." Mrs. Cole continues to tell the class to "SHHHHHH." [A great amount of discussion is taking place between individual students and groups of students.]
>
> Ben: [pointing to his shoe] "Is this blue, Mrs. Cole?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Yes. . .shhhh."
>
> Martha: "Mrs. Cole, does all of my shoe have to be blue?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Boys and girls, when I call a color look at your clothes to determine if you have that color or not on your clothes. If you do then you can read."
>
> Mike: "What if we don't have on any clothes?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Then you won't read will you?"
>
> Bill: "You mean you can't read if you don't have clothes on?" What if you don't have clothes on but you have blue shoes on?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: [sternly to Bill] "Do you have blue on your shoes?"
>
> Bill: "Not on this pair, but I have a pair at home that have blue stripes. Does that count?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Just the shoes on your feet now. Do they have blue on them?"
>
> Bill: [smiling rather sheepishly] "No."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Then it is not your turn to read. If you have blue on your shoe you may read. Let's begin." [Mrs. Cole begins to read and most of the students who are wearing blue join her.] (#339)

In the above example, several students delay Mrs. Cole's reading activity through the use of repetition. Student questioning influences Mrs. Cole to repeat her directions, which delays the class reading activity. As a result of the delay, my field notes reveal that the rest of the class

takes the opportunity to engage in talking, laughing, and poking at one another. The reading activity continues with similar student questions resulting with each new direction Mrs. Cole provides. After several episodes of the same type of student questioning. Mrs. Cole instructs students to "put the reading books away" (#341). She then proceeds to lead the class in singing several favorite songs. Through both participant observation and interviews, I find that the students' passive resistance strategy of repetition prevents the reading activity.

According to Mrs. Cole, such episodes with students are annoying, test her patience, and cause her to work harder to keep students on task (i.e., involved in the lesson). Mrs. Cole further comments that excessive student questioning results in the loss of valuable classroom time. In addition, Mrs. Cole states that student use of repetition influence both her immediate and long-term instructional goals. Consequently, she states that repetition often results in a delay or modification of the immediate lesson in which students use the micropolitical strategy of repetition. This time delay in one lesson creates a snowball effect, causing delays or even preventing the achievement of the day's ands week's remaining lessons.

Interruption

A second micropolitical passive resistance strategy I find in the data is interruption. Students use interruption as a micropolitical strategy of passive resistance to influence Mrs. Cole. For example, students use interruption, as a micropolitical strategy, to break in on teacher-directed activities or instruction they dislike. My field notes reveal that student interruption often distracts Mrs. Cole, thereby breaking the continuity of her lesson instruction. Furthermore, according to my findings, when a student or students interrupt Mrs. Cole, the other students often use the break in action to begin talking. The following field note excerpt demonstrates students' abilities to use interruption to influence Mrs. Cole.

> Mrs. Cole is seated, working with two boys at a learning center. Brian, who is supposed to be reading, tries to interrupt her instruction.
>
> Brian: "Mrs. Cole." [she does not respond] "Mrs. Cole." [still no response] "Mrs. Cole, can I give the gerbil water? [he pauses and pulls on her sleeve] Mrs. Cole?" [Mrs. Cole looks up at Brian]
>
> Mrs. Cole: "No Brian, you are supposed to be reading." [She goes back to working with the two boys at the learning center]
>
> Brian: "Mrs. Cole, [slight pause] Mrs. Cole. He [gerbil] needs water."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Not now."
>
> Brian: "Mrs. Cole. [he pauses slightly] Mrs. Cole, can I move his house?" [Mrs. Cole takes a deep breath and looks impatient as she gets up and moves with Brian over by the gerbil cage]

Mrs. Cole: "Why? His house doesn't need to be moved. Get busy reading, Brian."

Brian: "I don't want to read, I would rather feed the gerbil."

Mrs. Cole: "It is time to read now, maybe later you can feed the gerbil."

Brian: "Can I read by the gerbil so I can watch him?"

Mrs. Cole: "How are you going to watch the gerbil and read at the same time?"

Brian: "I can do it. I have done it before at home. Pleeeeeease, can I?"

Mrs. Cole: "OK, just make sure you read."

Brian spent what little reading time that was left looking and poking his pencil at the gerbil. He never began the reading assignment (#55).

Brian's use of interruption as a micropolitical strategy of influence has consequences not only for himself but for Mrs. Cole and his fellow classmates as well. For example, Brian's interruption distracts and prevents Mrs. Cole from completing her instruction with the two boys at the learning center. With the break in instruction and Mrs. Cole with Brian at the gerbil cage, the two boys at the learning center begin to talk and laugh together. My field notes reveal that the boys fail to finish their learning center project. Furthermore, as a result of Brian's use of interruption, he delays and eventually prevents the completion of his own reading assignment, which he appears to have little interest in.

Students also influence Mrs. Cole by interrupting her instructional explanations prematurely. When interrupted, Mrs. Cole often becomes distracted (i.e., loses her train of thought) and fails to complete sentences she starts. For example, Mrs. Cole began explaining an assignment to students:

Mrs. Cole: [Mrs. Cole is discussing a dictionary assignment] "If there is any information you have learned I want you to use it to--" [She stops in mid-sentence because Beth interrupts her.]

Beth: "I can't find my dictionary."

Mrs. Cole: "Look in your desk."

Beth: "I looked in my desk."

Mrs. Cole: "Look again, it [desk] is such a mess." Mrs. Cole helps Beth locate her dictionary in her desk. She then looks back around the classroom and begins discuss the assignment, "Let's see, turn to the second page, on the second page let's--[She is interrupted by Mike.]

Mike: "What are we gonna do after this?"

> Mrs. Cole: "Mike, don't worry about that, just get busy. OK, let's all get busy." Mrs. Cole fails to complete her assignment instructions. (#59)

As evidenced in the above field note excerpt, Beth and Mike influence Mrs. Cole through the micropolitical strategy of interruption. Beth and Mike's interruption distracts Mrs. Cole which results in her failure to complete an instructional assignment. Mike explains the influence of interruption upon Mrs. Cole in this way:

> Sometimes when someone interrupts Mrs. Cole she doesn't finish telling us all the things to do and then we don't have to do as much or we don't get in trouble because we didn't do it because we can say you didn't say to do it. (#68)

As revealed from Mike's above statement, students take advantage of Mrs. Cole's distracted state and use the situation to prevent or modify their academic assignments. According to student interview comments, if Mrs. Cole questions students about the incompleteness or inaccuracy of their work, students will, in a unified effort, put the blame back on Mrs. Cole stating that she did not originally instruct students to complete the assignment in the manner she is presently describing.

Furthermore, instead of interrupting while Mrs. Cole is talking, students interrupt a lesson upon the first available pause or break in lesson activity. For example, according to my field notes, students use interruption even with small, momentary breaks in lesson activity that result from a cough or sneeze by Mrs. Cole. Other breaks in lesson activity are more prolonged, such as a knock at the classroom door or an announcement over the public address system. Regardless of the cause of the break in instruction, my field notes reveal that students use the break to interrupt the lesson. According to my data, interruption influences Mrs. Cole by distracting, delaying, and often preventing her from giving academic instructions. For example, I find instances in my data when Mrs. Cole reexplains instructions and shortens lesson instructions and assignments as a result of student interruption.

Topic Changes

A third micropolitical passive resistance strategy I find in my data is topic changes. Students use topic changing, as a micropolitical strategy, to change or alter the topic of Mrs. Cole's conversations and instructions. Students state that they use topic changing to avoid teacher conversations or activities that they dislike.

According to Mrs. Cole, topic changes are distracting and even confusing. She notes that topic changes delay instruction and even have the potential to prevent instruction and academic activities if used excessively. In addition, Mrs. Cole notes that she often falls for topic changing without initially realizing what is happening. However, once she realized that the class is off

topic, she works to bring the class discussion back to the instructional topic that students are attempting to avoid. Mrs. Cole further notes that in her worry and concern over students' welfare she sometimes allows herself to be pulled off topic in order to meet what she perceives to be a greater need of a student or students (e.g., an emotional or social need).

Students use topic changes in two ways: (1) by responding to Mrs. Cole's questions with completely unrelated responses and (2) by initiating topic changing questions. First, students respond to Mrs. Cole's questions by changing the topic with completely unrelated responses. For example, the following two student responses by Beth and Mark demonstrate students' intentional attempts to change the topic of Mrs. Cole's instructional conversation.

> (1) When questioned to whether she had located her dictionary guide words, Beth responds, "My cousin has a Dalmatian dog and it just had puppies. Do you like puppies?" (#61)
>
> (2) When asked about a picture on his time line, Mark responds, "Do you know what I am going to do after school today? I am going to play with Matt." (#234)

In both of the above cases, the change of topic catches Mrs. Cole off guard and changes the content if her instructional conversation. In both cases, after making their topic changing statements, other students in the classroom reinforce the topic change. For instance, in example one, students begin to describe their own pets. In example two, students begin to describe their after school activities. Mrs. Cole allows the conversations to continue for several minutes before redirecting the students to her original initiated topic. According to Mrs. Cole, having the topic of conversation changed by students is not uncommon. She further acknowledges that topic changing is distracting and delays classroom instructional time.

I asked students why they frequently attempt to change the topic of Mrs. Cole's instructional conversation. My initial concern was whether students' topic changing was intentional resistance or simply developmental behavior (i.e., characterized by developmental innocence). While I am sure that students do, at times, change the topic of conversations as a result of their developmental innocence, students readily admit that they can and do use topic changes intentionally and with the goal of preventing certain teacher questions, topics, or activities. According to students, the topics or questions they avoid are ones they dislike or do not understand.

Another way in which students change the topic of Mrs. Cole's instructional conversation is by initiating their own topic changing questions. My field notes record the following example of students' abilities to change the topic of Mrs. Cole's academic instruction.

> According to Mrs. Cole's instructions, students are to pick a compound word from a large chart she has displayed. Several students chose incorrect answers and are instructed to "keep trying" by Mrs. Cole. Student guessing continues on

> for several minutes. Finally, Welsley pointed to the word "haven't" [not the compound word] on the chart and says, "Hey, isn't that a contraction? I remember studying about contractions. Now what is a contraction?"
>
> Mrs. Cole responds affirmatively that the word "haven't" is indeed a contraction and begins to explain and review contractions with the rest of the class. Other class members ask her questions about contractions. As a result of this change in topic, the students never did identify the compound word and the class soon moved on to another activity. (#321)

As demonstrated in the above field note excerpt, the micropolitical strategy of topic changing prevents further instructional activity by Mrs. Cole on the topic of compound words. When I asked students to explain their topic changing strategy in the above example, they respond that compound words are difficult and not interesting. Aaron states, "We change the topic because it's hard and we didn't understand it so we talked about something we understood better, like contractions" (#350). Another student, Blake, adds, "It was one [the topic of compound words] I didn't like and was boring (#350). Students further comment that they initiate topic changing when they want to "get Mrs. Cole to let them do or talk about something fun(er)" and to "take up time so we didn't have time to do it" [the disliked activity and instruction of compound words] (#350). In all of the preceding comments, students demonstrate their goal for using topic changes as a micropolitical strategy, namely to avoid disliked topics and activities. Students further state that they dislike an activity because it is difficult, uninteresting, or incomprehensible.

Ignoring

A fourth micropolitical passive strategy I find in my field notes is ignoring. Ignoring, a micropolitical strategy, refers to students' purposive mental withdrawal from classroom activities. Ignoring often prevents the student from experiencing Mrs. Cole's instructions and directions.

I find ignoring to often be a student response to Mrs. Cole's requests. The following field note excerpt provides an example of how a group of students prevent the success of Mrs. Cole's classroom instruction by ignoring her requests to get quiet:

> The students and Mrs. Cole are seated in the reading circle discussing a reading lesson. Every time Mrs. Cole calls on a student to answer a question, the rest of the students begin to talk, wiggle, and poke at each other.
>
> Mrs. Cole: [to the class] "Shhhhhhh, we need to get quiet." [The students look toward her but then return to talking. The entire class ignores her request to get quiet and to raise their hands.]
>
> Mrs. Cole: [She calls, rather forcefully, the name of a student who is talking loudly.] "Mike!" Mike looks toward Mrs. Cole for a moment and then returns to his talking. Mrs. Cole pauses for a moment and looks unbelievingly at the

> classroom. She then reaches out and takes Mike by the arm and moves him over to sit by her. "Shhhhhhhhh, Shhhhhhhhh." Finally, Mrs. Cole announces that the class will sing a song [a change of activity]. *She begins singing and the* students join in. The students succeed in preventing the success of her reading lesson. (#35)

As in the case of the above field note example, the students influence Mrs. Cole through the micropolitical strategy of ignoring. Ignoring influences Mrs. Cole to forfeit her planned lesson in favor of a student preferred activity. In other words, ignoring as a micropolitical strategy prevents the success of Mrs. Cole's reading lesson and results in a change to a more favorable activity for the students, namely singing.

Students also delay and distract classroom activities by using ignoring as a micropolitical strategy. An example, excerpted from my field notes follows:

> Mrs. Cole instructs several girls to read outloud together from their reading novel. The girls begin to read. After a few moments, Mrs. Cole instructs the girls to "stop reading." The girls ignore her and continue on reading from their books outloud.
>
> "Girls, would you please stop." Again, the girls ignore Mrs. Cole and instead begin to read faster and louder. Several giggles escape from the girls. Very sternly Mrs. Cole states, "Stop! Stop reading! It is someone else's turn." The girls finally comply with Mrs. Cole's third request to stop reading. One girl, Devin, looks at Mrs. Cole and says, "Oh, did you tell us to stop?" (#67)

As described in the above field note, the girls use ignoring to delay and distract the reading lesson. According to Mrs. Cole, such student behavior results in delays in lessons, which often means that her planned activities must either be modified, rescheduled, or go uncompleted as a result of classroom time constraints.

According to students, they often use ignoring as a micropolitical strategy because of their loss of interest or boredom in an activity. Students state that loss of interest or boredom occurs most often when academic lessons have gone on for an extended period of time. Bored students ignore the uninteresting activity and seek other activities to stimulate their interest. To ignore uninteresting activities, students say they use their imaginations. Matthew explains, "Sometimes I turn my imagination on when Mrs. Cole is talking. My imagination takes me somewhere else and I don't hear what she is saying" (#247). Thus, through the use of his imagination, Matthew ignores Mrs. Cole and prevents the activity or conversation that he dislikes.

During interviews, students state that they have good imaginations, enjoy using their imaginations, and do so frequently. According to students, by using their imaginations, they ignore teacher initiated activities, events, and instructions that they dislike.

In addition to using their imaginations, students also state that they ignore Mrs. Cole's instruction and directions by diverting their attention to other objects or people. I find in my data that students especially like to divert their attention to objects they bring from home. For example, Martha keeps a stuffed toy dog in her desk. She explains that when she gets bored, she slips the dog out of her desk and places it in her lap. I find that Martha is very careful to position the dog in such a way that it can be quickly placed back in her desk if need be, and Mrs. Cole cannot see it. According to Martha, "I like playing with my dog" especially when "the class is doing something I don't like. I keep him [the dog] there just in case I get bored" (#243).

Other students, like Martha, ignore Mrs. Cole by diverting their attention toward more interesting objects they bring from home. Although the type of object differs (e.g., toys, desk accessories, jewelry), the reasons are the same: to avoid participating in a disliked classroom activity.

I find students also ignore Mrs. Cole by diverting their attention to the actions of other students. For example, this often means watching other students build a sword from magic markers, twirling a scotch tape receptacle around a pencil, or thumping themselves on the head with a pencil. The above examples are but a few of the many activities students use to divert their attention toward the actions of other students. My field notes further reveal that, Mrs. Cole, upon noting one of the above mentioned student activities, interrupts her lesson activity in order to stop the student diversion and to refocus the class upon her lesson activity. My data reveal that this process of stopping her lesson to refocus students, both distracts and delays Mrs. Cole's lesson instruction.

In summary, students passively resist Mrs. Cole through the micropolitical strategy of ignoring. Ignoring as a micropolitical strategy refers to students' purposive mental withdrawal from classroom activities they dislike. According to Mrs. Cole, ignoring delays, distracts, and even prevents her instruction and academic activities. According to students, they use ignoring to avoid or modify Mrs. Cole's conversation or activities they dislike. Students further discuss the use of their imaginations and the diversion of their attention to more interesting objects or people as ways to use ignoring.

Partial Compliance

I also find students to use partial compliance as a micropolitical strategy of passive resistance. Students resist Mrs. Cole's instructions and directions through partial compliance. Partial compliance refers to student conformity to a part of a teacher request but not to the entire request. often, partial compliance is characterized by students doing the right thing in the wrong way. For example, during a reading lesson Mrs. Cole tells the class to read a passage for a novel both outloud and in unison. Mrs. Cole uses novels instead of reading textbooks for reading

instruction. The students immediately begin reading outloud, but not in unison. Mrs. Cole stops the class, reexplains her instructions, and restarts the class reading. The result is a delay in the reading lesson. Several episodes of the same pattern of teacher-student interactions (i.e., student partial compliance and Mrs. Cole's reexplanation) consume a considerable amount of lesson time.

The following field note excerpt describes another example of student use of partial compliance as a micropolitical influence strategy.

> During a math lesson, a group of boys begin talking and making quacking noises with their mouths. The quacking noises gradually get louder. Mrs. Cole looks sternly at the boys and tells them to "stop making that noise." Immediately, the boys stop making "that" noise (i.e., the quacking noise) but quickly convert to a new noise, a cheeping noise. The same pattern begins again. (#49)

As evidenced by the above example, the boys resist Mrs. Cole's instruction by partially complying with her request. Through partial compliance, the boys delay Mrs. Cole's lesson. My field notes reveal that the delay occurs when Mrs. Cole stops her lesson to reprimand the boys. Furthermore, the boys distract the class. My field notes reveal that distraction occurs when the class turns their attention away from Mr. Cole and focuses on the activities (i.e., noise making) of the boys.

Review of Passive Resistance

In summary, the first subcategory of student micropolitical influence I developed from the data is passive resistance. As compared to aggressive resistance (to be discussed next), student passive resistance micropolitical strategies are less direct and less confrontational. In addition, my research reveals that the students of my study are more likely to use micropolitical strategies of passive resistance than micropolitical strategies of aggressive resistance. Passive resistance includes the micropolitical strategies of repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, and partial compliance.

As revealed by student interviews, the goal of student passive resistance is to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities that students dislike. Students have varying reasons for disliking an activity. For example, student interviews reveal that students often dislike an activity because they do not understand it and do not feel confident in succeeding with the activity. Students also say they dislike activities if the activities are uninteresting or too difficult. On the other hand, students also dislike an activity if it is too easy and lacks challenge. Regardless of the specific reasons behind their dislike of an activity, students use micropolitical strategies to avoid the activities they dislike. As Megan so simply explains, "Kids like to do stuff they like. If they don't like it they don't want to do it. If they don't want to do it, they figure out

how not to do it" (#302). Megan's statement seems to represent the comments of all the students in the class; simply put, students resist activities they dislike.

Students reveal and explain their passive resistance goals mainly during interviews I initiated with them. During these interviews, students often provide an example of a specific micropolitical strategy while explaining their micropolitical goal. For instance, in the following two interview excerpts, Matthew and Martha connect their use of ignoring to their goal of preventing classroom activities or instruction they dislike:

> Example #1--Matthew: "Sometimes math is boring, and I don't want to do it. I use my imagination or find something else to do until it is not boring." (#247)
>
> Example #2--Martha: "I like playing with my dog especially when the class is doing something I don't like." (#243)

Both Matthew and Martha use ignoring as a micropolitical strategy to prevent an activity they dislike. In example one, Matthew uses ignoring to prevent a boring activity, a particular type of math activity. In the second example, Martha uses ignoring by diverting her attention to another object to prevent a class activity she dislikes. While their explanations differ slightly (Matthew describes disliking the activity while Martha describes being bored by the activity), in both examples, the students use ignoring as a micropolitical strategy to prevent participation in the classroom activity.

During interviews, I discovered other student micropolitical strategies and student goals for using the strategies. For example, in explaining her use of topic changing as a micropolitical strategy, Beth explains, "I change what we are talking about because I don't like it. I would rather talk about something else." (#240). Beth connects her use of topic changing to her dislike of a classroom activity. Simply put, when Beth dislikes an activity, she attempts to prevent it or avoid it by changing the subject.

Students also reveal and explain their goals for using partial compliance as a micropolitical strategy. For example, Blake explains:

> Sometimes I'll do part of what she [Mrs. Cole] wants but not all of what she wants because I really don't like what she wants me to do. But if I don't do part of it I will get in big trouble. So I do part. (#237)

In this case, Blake acknowledges he used partial compliance when he does not like an activity. However, he also recognizes the potential negative personal outcomes (i.e., punishment) that can result from a refusal to do the activity. Thus, Blake, in using partial compliance as a micropolitical strategy, does enough of the activity to stay out of trouble and yet still manages to avoid part of the disliked activity. While Blake does not prevent the entire activity, he modifies it so he can deal with it better.

Another student, Brian, discusses his goal in using interruption as a micropolitical strategy. I asked Brian to explain why he persistently interrupted Mrs. Cole during a reading assignment. Brian explains:

> I didn't want to read. I get tired of reading. I like it sometimes (reading) but not some stories and not doing it for so long. So when I don't like it I keep interrupting Mrs. Cole and asking her about doing other things I like better but she will say, "go back and do your reading." So I keep trying and asking, she gets tired of me interrupting and she will let me do something else that I like better. (#256)

According to Brian, interruption is a strategy he uses to prevent, delay, or modify activities that he dislikes. Furthermore, Brian states that the strategy of interruption is better used through its persistent and often unrelenting use on Mrs. Cole. Brian confides that even if Mrs. Cole still refuses to modify or forfeit his reading assignment, he is able to consume a great deal of time with his persistent use of the strategy. As a result, very little remaining activity time is available in which he actually has to participate in the disliked activity. Therefore, if Brian is unable to completely prevent the activity, he can still delay or modify it to avoid as much of the activity as possible.

The final micropolitical passive resistance strategy is that of repetition. Students also discuss their goals for using repetition as a micropolitical strategy. During a small group interview, Ralston explains students' use of repetition:

> Some kids ask lots of questions on purpose and Mrs. Cole has to keep repeating herself. . .see, the kids already know the answers but they ask the questions anyway and they ask the same questions in different ways. . .so then Mrs. Cole, she says the same answers over and over. . .it takes a lot of time so she don't have time to explain everything and we don't have time to finish everything. Kids do this, it keeps kids from having to do the things they don't want to do, things they don't like. (#277)

According to Ralston, repetition, used as a micropolitical strategy, prevents students from participating in classroom activities that they dislike. Furthermore, during my group interview, the students acknowledge their ability to recognize when other students use micropolitical strategies. Students reveal through their comments that they not only recognize other students' use of micropolitical strategies such as repetition, but often join in to strengthen the strategy's impact if it will benefit them individually.

As evident from the above student interview responses, students have definite preferences (i.e., likes and dislikes) about the activities they pursue in the classroom. When students dislike a teacher initiated activity or instruction, they engage in passive resistance micropolitical strategies to delay, distract, modify, or even prevent the disliked activity or instruction.

Subcategory of Student Micropolitical Resistance: Aggressive Resistance

A second subcategory of student micropolitical influence I developed from the data is that of aggressive resistance. Aggressive resistance refers to bold and often confrontational student opposition directed toward Mrs. Cole. Mrs. Cole describes such confrontations as being stressful, intimidating, and potentially embarrassing for her. Unlike passive resistance, aggressive resistance involves micropolitical strategies that are much more direct and overt. I find students to participate in aggressive micropolitical strategies less often than passive micropolitical strategies. In fact, overall I find students in my study to use very few instances of aggressive resistance.

Students use aggressive resistance almost exclusively to prevent teacher initiated activities or instruction that they dislike. Students who use aggressive micropolitical strategies are more concerned with preventing the disliked activity than with modifying or delaying the activity. In addition, students who use aggressive micropolitical strategies express little concern with the personal outcome of their strategies (i.e., resulting punishment). Micropolitical strategies of aggressive resistance include: protesting and using intermediaries.

Protesting

According to my field notes, students aggressively resist Mrs. Cole through the use of protesting. Protesting, as a micropolitical strategy is an individual (vs. group) student expression of intense dissatisfaction intended to oppose or challenge disliked teacher statements or actions. Student protesting generally takes the form of intense verbal objections and arguments. Students use protesting to prevent teacher initiated activities and instructions that they dislike. According to students, protesting often influences Mrs. Cole to rescind her statements or actions and conform to student wishes.

As evidenced by the following field note excerpt, students use the micropolitical strategy of protesting to oppose Mrs. Cole and to influence her to forfeit assignments that they dislike.

> The students are each making their own book as part of an academic unit on "How books are made." Mrs. Cole has instructed the students to add illustrations to enhance their books. Most students have completed or at least begun their illustrations. Mrs. Cole, noting that Nick has no illustrations in his book, tells him he needs to get busy with his illustrations.
>
> Nick protests: "I don't want to illustrate my book."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Illustrations help the reader understand the book. It will make your book better."
>
> Nick: "No it won't. I don't want to add pictures."

> Mrs. Cole: "It will help the reader to understand by giving them pictures to look at."
>
> Nick [very adamantly]: "It won't."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Yes, illustrations are important."
>
> Nick [loudly]: "I don't like books with pictures. I like books without pictures because then I can use my imagination to make pictures and my pictures are better than the ones in the book. So I don't want my book to have pictures." [Other students are now watching the interaction taking place between Nick and Mrs. Cole.]
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Everyone in the class is using illustrations in their book. You don't want to be the only book without illustrations."
>
> Nick: [Nick's body is tense and his breathing is rapid and loud. He looks like he is going to cry. Tears begin to well in his eyes.] Nick yells, "I said I don't want to illustrate my book!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: Mrs. Cole pauses for a moment, "O.K. Nick, [she pauses again and seems to be reflecting on the situation] you don't have to illustrate your book." (#63-65)

As the result of Nick's protest, Mrs. Cole forfeits Nick's illustration assignment. When I asked Mrs. Cole about letting Nick forfeit the illustrations from his book, she replied, "Nick had a good argument for not illustrating his book and he was so upset about it" (#81). Mrs. Cole explained that Nick's behavior was bothersome to her, and that she feared he was going to lose complete control and make a "nasty scene in the classroom." She further explained that in this situation, it was more important for her to keep Nick from losing complete control than it was for her to make Nick illustrate his book. According to Mrs. Cole, if Nick was to lose complete control, even more of her energy and time would be consumed. In addition, Mrs. Cole reveals that direct and overt confrontations, such as this one with Nick, are extremely stressful and potentially embarrassing for her if she is unable to get Nick under control. So, in this case, Mrs. Cole's psychological concerns take precedence over her pedagogical ones.

As for Nick, he later explains the situation, "I didn't care how much trouble I got in. I don't like to draw and I wasn't gonna do it" (#113). Nick is never clear on why he so dislikes drawing illustrations. However, what is clear is that he is not going to draw, no matter what the cost to him personally.

Students also use protesting when they perceive an action or statement by Mrs. Cole to be unfair. The following field note excerpt provides such an example:

> The students are in line for lunch. Several students are pushing and accusing each other of cutting in line.

> Mrs. Cole: "We are going to be late for lunch because you {i.e., the entire class} are being loud. We are just going to stay in this line, we are not going to move until **everyone** {emphasized by Mrs. Cole} is quiet."
>
> Chris (Loudly): "I am being quiet!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "No, you're not."
>
> Chris: "I am too! It's not fair, they {i.e., pointing to several class members} are the one's being loud!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: Looking at Chris, "If **everyone** {i.e., with emphasis} will be quiet, we can go to lunch."
>
> Chris: "It was Paul and Mike who were talking! You said I was talking. I was being quiet!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Chris, be quiet."
>
> Chris: "I was being quiet!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "You were being quiet?"
>
> Chris: "I was quiet."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "OK, OK. Let's just walk quietly to lunch. Chris, come up here and lead us to lunch." Mrs. Cole places Chris at the front of the line.
>
> Chris leads the class to lunch, even though everyone is <u>not</u> quiet. Several students continue to talk and push each other. Chris seems content as he leads the class to lunch. (#212)

In the above field note excerpt, Chris uses the micropolitical strategy of protesting to challenge Mrs. Cole's statement that "everyone (i.e., including Chris) is being loud." In explaining his behavior, Chris states:

> I hate being late for lunch cause then you don't get as much free time (i.e., students have play time outside after finishing lunch) and I hate it when she says everyone is talking and I am not and then I miss my free time. (#218)

According to Chris, he feels Mrs. Cole's punishment (i.e., making him late for lunch) is unjust and unfair. He wants her to know in a direct and overt way how he feels about her unfair accusation to prevent it from happening again. As a result of Chris' continuous and aggressive protesting, Mrs. Cole lets the students go to lunch regardless of the noise level. My field notes reveal that students are still talking in line and had not gotten quiet as Mrs. Cole instructed. Mrs. Cole rescinds her original statement that "everyone [must be] quiet [before] we can go to lunch." Mrs. Cole appears to be more focused on stopping Chris' emotional protesting than in getting the

rest of the students to be quiet in line. This time, Mrs. Cole places her psychological concerns over socialization ones.

In explaining her actions, Mrs. Cole states, "At that point, I just wanted to get Chris to lunch so he would settle down and be quiet and so I could have some peace. Stuff like that [Chris' protesting] can drive you crazy!" (#255). With this comment Mrs. Cole reveals her susceptibility to students' aggressive resistance behavior. Aggressive student behavior fractures her peace. In addition, Mrs. Cole notes that she would have felt very embarrassed if another teacher, a parent, or the principal had heard or witnessed Chris' actions. If they had, Mrs. Cole is afraid that they would perceive her to lack the ability to control her students and, thus, label her as an ineffective teacher.

My data further reveal that, as a result of Chris' aggressive behavior, Mrs. Cole questions her own behavior. She comments that punishing the whole class for the misbehavior of a few students really is not fair. My field notes reveal her commenting on trying several new ideas for controlling classroom behavior that she perceives to be more equitable to all students.

The following field note excerpt is another example of a student, Ralston, protesting what he perceives to be an unfair situation:

> Ralston is upset that the girls have lined up first to go to lunch.
> Ralston to Mrs. Cole: "Hey, how come you let the girls go first?"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "I didn't have to ask any girls to be quiet and to put their hands at their sides."
>
> Ralston: "Girls are your favorite. I saw girls talking. The girls were talking!"
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Shhhhh"
>
> Ralston: "The girls always talk and you let them go first every time! It's not fair! Girls always get chosen."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "SHHHHH!"
>
> Ralston: "Girls can talk and not get in trouble but boys can do nothing and get in trouble. {Walking extra heavily down the hall} "Dumb ol' girls, dumb ol' girls."
>
> Mrs. Cole to Ralston: "Next time, the boys can go first, OK? It will be the boys turn tomorrow." (#241)

In the above field note excerpt, Ralston directly protests Mrs. Cole's decision to let the girls go first to lunch. Ralston bases his protest on the grounds that Mrs. Cole shows favoritism to girls and does not make the girls comply to the same behavioral rules as boys. In using protesting as a micropolitical strategy, Ralston overtly voices his intense dissatisfaction about Mrs. Cole's decision. While Ralston's protest does not influence Mrs. Cole to change her decision about

letting the girls go first to lunch on that particular day, it does result in her announcing her intention to let the boys go to lunch first the following day. My field notes reveal that the boys do go to lunch first the following day.

The following field note excerpt provides yet another example of how one student, Paula, uses protesting as a micropolitical strategy to prevent doing a teacher requested instruction that she dislikes:

> The class is giving their individual oral reports on the "sea unit." Paula is standing in front of the class, ready to give her oral report on swordfish. Mrs. Cole is video taping each student's report. The students will then take turns taking the video tape home to watch with their parents. Mrs. Cole turns the camera on and then finds a seat between two students.
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Paula, tell your name and the name of your report."
>
> Paula: "My name? The class already knows my name. I don't need to say my name? That's silly."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Yes you do, for the tape, say your name."
>
> Paula [raises her voice]: "I don't want to say my name."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Just state your name and the title of your report. Not everyone who sees the tape will know your name."
>
> Paula: "They can ask their kid then. Their kid knows my name."
>
> Mrs. Cole: "Hurry up Paula, we have a lot of reports to do. Say your name and get on with it."
>
> Paula: "No. I don't want to." [Paula starts shaking her head side to side as a nonverbal signal for the word no. She continues shaking side to side and refuses to stop and look at Mrs. Cole.]
>
> Mrs. Cole: "O.K. Paula, just get on with your report. You are wasting your time and everyone else's as well." Paula begins her report without giving her name. (#85)

As evidenced in the above example, Paula uses the micropolitical strategy of protesting to influence Mrs. Cole to rescind her instruction (i.e., that Paula state her name for the camera). According to Paula, she dislikes "telling [her] name in cameras" and feels "silly doing it" (#131). Furthermore, Paula states, "I'm not going to do things that make me look silly" (#131). According to Paula's comments, she dislikes and feels self-conscious stating her name on the camera. Paula is also willing to face the consequences (possible punishment) of her actions rather than state her name on the camera.

In explaining her actions of allowing Paula to give her report without stating her name, Mrs. Cole comments:

> After a point some things just don't seem worth it. If I would have said anything else she would just have argued about it some more. We [class] didn't have the time and I didn't have the patience or the energy to continue arguing with her. (#159)

In describing her actions, Mrs. Cole states that continuing her effort to make Paula conform to her instruction would have consumed more time and energy than she was willing to give. In addition, Mrs. Cole does not feel that she would ever have succeeded in getting Paula to conform to her instruction. As a result, Paula succeeds in giving her report without stating her name.

In summary, students aggressively resist Mrs. Cole through the use of protesting. Protesting, as a micropolitical strategy, is an individual (i.e., vs. group) student expression of intense dissatisfaction intended to directly oppose or challenge disliked teacher statements or actions. Student protesting generally takes the form of intense verbal objections and arguments. Students use protesting to prevent teacher initiated activities and instructions that they dislike. According to students, protesting often influences Mrs. Cole to rescind her statements or actions and support student wishes.

Using Intermediaries

Students also aggressively resist disliked teacher actions through the use of intermediaries. Intermediaries, in a micropolitical sense, are student supporters who intervene between Mrs. Cole and the student for the purpose of preventing teacher initiated activities or instructions that students dislike. Below, two students describe their micropolitical intermediary use in a recent school situation:

> Sam: "We don't get in trouble very much. When we have been in trouble is when the whole class has to sit down during recess. We are not talking but the whole class has to sit down because a few kids are talking."
>
> Megan: "Like if someone starts talking and they get in trouble, we all get in trouble. Then we have to sit down and miss out on play time."
>
> Sam: "We didn't like it and we told Mrs. Cole but she wouldn't listen to us and we were afraid we were going to get in trouble. So we told our parents about it, like how unfair it was and that it wasn't our fault and that Mrs. Cole wouldn't listen to us. But now we don't have to do it [miss play time] anymore because we told our parents."
>
> Megan: "Our parents talked to [the principal]. Now Mrs. Cole can't do that anymore. She can't make us sit down when it's someone else's fault." (#97)

As evidenced in the above field note excerpt, students use their parents and the principal as intermediaries to successfully influence Mrs. Cole to change her actions. According to the

students, the use of intermediaries is a last resort. For example, students state that they will seek to influence Mrs. Cole first on their own but if they are unsuccessful, they will then seek intermediary support of parents and the principal. According to Mrs. Cole, student use of intermediaries is intimidating, especially in cases where, in hind sight, she feels that she did not use her best judgment in dealing with students.

Review of Aggressive Resistance

In review, the second subcategory of student micropolitical influence developed from the data is that of aggressive resistance. Aggressive resistance refers to bold and often confrontational student actions directed toward Mrs. Cole. Micropolitical strategies of aggressive resistance include protesting and the use of intermediaries. According to Mrs. Cole, such confrontations are stressful, intimidating, and potentially embarrassing for her. Unlike passive resistance, student aggressive resistance involves micropolitical strategies that are much more direct and overt. I find students to participate in aggressive micropolitical strategies less often than passive micropolitical strategies. For instance, I actually witnessed (i.e., through participant observation) only four instances of student use of protesting as an aggressive micropolitical strategy. I conducted student and teacher interviews to triangulate each of the protesting instances I witnessed. I did not witness any instances of student use of intermediaries as an aggressive micropolitical strategy. Students reveal the strategy of intermediaries through their interview comments and admit that they use the strategy infrequently as a last resort.

As revealed by student interviews, the goal of student aggressive resistance is to prevent teacher initiated activities or instruction that students intensely dislike. Students reveal and explain their aggressive resistance goals mainly during interviews. During these interviews, students describe and explain their micropolitical strategies and intended goal outcomes. For example, students connect their use of protesting as a micropolitical strategy of resistance to achieving their goal of avoiding or preventing an intensely disliked teacher activity. The following two student interview excerpts describe this connection:

> Welsley: "Some things aren't fair. Kids let Mrs. Cole know that they don't like it and that it's not right and that they aren't going to do it so she can change her mind." (#271)
>
> Blake: "We tell her [Mrs. Cole] because we don't like it, we hate it, we can't stand it. . . we let her know how we feel, like how it isn't fair. When she knows how strongly we feel and that we are going to feel that way until she changes it she will change her mind."
> (#272)

In both Welsley's and Blake's interview excerpts, they begin their comments by stating their intense dislike or even hatred for a particular activity or instruction that Mrs. Cole expected them

to conform to. In addition both comments demonstrate Welsley's and Blake's intentional abilities to present their feelings to Mrs. Cole in the form of a protest. The students express their strong dislike of a specific activity or event, describe their feelings, announce their intentions, and then wait to see what Mrs. Cole will do. Furthermore, I find in my data that students who protest certain teacher initiated instructions or decisions are usually not interested in compromise with Mrs. Cole but rather in having their own conditions met, which usually means Mrs. Cole has to forfeit a particular decision or instruction.

According to students, they use micropolitical aggressive resistance strategies when they feel intense dislike. Intense dislike of an activity results in students using micropolitical strategies without regard to the personal outcome of their actions (i.e., potential punishment).

Students also reveal and discuss their micropolitical goals as they describe their use of intermediaries as a micropolitical strategy to influence Mrs. Cole. For example, Devin states, "If something is really bad and we can't stop it, and Mrs. Cole won't listen to us, we tell our parents because she [Mrs. Cole] listens to parents" (#291). According to Devin, she uses intermediaries as a micropolitical strategy under the following four circumstances: (1) when the situation is severe, (2) when other strategies fail to prevent the disliked activity, (3) when she can not perceive any other way of preventing or avoiding the situation, and (4) when she cannot get Mrs. Cole to agree with her concerns.

Furthermore, according to all students' interview comments, parents have more power with Mrs. Cole than students do; therefore, students use parents to accomplish what they cannot and yet want in the classroom. Another student, Megan, echoes the same thoughts when she states, "Sometimes my Mom will tell Mrs. Cole if I don't like something and don't want to do something and Mrs. Cole won't make me do it" (#293). As this comment reveals, parents are strong intermediaries that student use to avoid or prevent classroom activities they dislike.

As evident from all the above interview responses, students are able to identify and strategically resist teacher initiated activities that they strongly or intensely dislike. Although discussed earlier under the subcategory of student passive resistance, it should be noted again that individual student reasons for disliking a teacher initiated activity are extremely varied. For example, students mention such reasons as fear of failure, fear of peer rejection, lack of comprehension, and boredom as reasons for disliking an activity. However, regardless of individual student's reasons for disliking a teacher initiated activity, all students (i.e., as revealed through student interviews) use aggressive micropolitical influence strategies to prevent activities they intensely dislike.

Consequences of Student Passive and Aggressive Micropolitical Resistance on the Teacher

According to Mrs. Cole, students' use of micropolitical strategies of resistance, both passive and aggressive, are very influential on her both professionally and personally. She explains:

> While I wish students would always cooperate with everything I say and do, I certainly don't expect that. I think that's [student resistance] part of teaching. So **some** [emphasis added by Mrs. Cole] resistance is beneficial, it helps me to know how the students are reacting to what I am doing. It gives me feedback. Helps me to re-adjust my teaching or makes me aware of student needs. (#321)

In the above interview excerpt, Mrs. Cole reveals that she expects and benefits from some (i.e., mild and occasional) student resistance. According to Mrs. Cole, she uses the feedback she gains from student resistance to help her to evaluate and readjust her teaching to meet students needs.

However, Mrs. Cole acknowledges that student strategies of resistance that are excessive and occur continuously have negative consequences for her. In explaining the negative effects of excessive student resistance, Mrs. Cole changes the focus of her interview comments from her students to herself. She states:

> When it [student resistance] is **excessive** or **aggressive** and **continuous** {emphasis added by Mrs. Cole}, and nothing I do works, then it really affects me negatively. It affects me professionally as a teacher. I wonder if I am doing a good job, if I am a good teacher. And that affects me personally. You can't help but feel depressed personally if you feel you are not performing well. (#327)

Mrs. Cole uses the terms excessive, aggressive, and continuous to describe student micropolitical strategies that have negative affects on her. For the most part, she is describing the aggressive resistant student strategies of protesting and the use of intermediaries. However, Mrs. Cole also identifies excessive use of passive student strategies such as ignoring, topic changes, partial compliance, interruption, and repetition, as having negative consequences on her.

I asked Mrs. Cole to describe specifically the negative consequences she experiences from students' excessive, aggressive, and continuous micropolitical strategies of resistance. In her answer, she links such student micropolitical strategies of resistance to her feelings of professional incompetence, personal discouragement, job dissatisfaction, and fatigue.

In referring to her feeling of professional incompetence, Mrs. Cole states, "you're afraid you're not a good teacher, even though you know you are, you worry that maybe you have lost it. You feel like a failure as a teacher" (#327). According to Mrs. Cole, when students use excessive and aggressive forms of resistance in the classroom, she feels that she is not a good

teacher, that she has failed in her professional role to control student behavior and to motivate students to learn.

Mrs. Cole explains that students' excessive and aggressive use of micropolitical resistant strategies create within her feelings of personal discouragement. In discussing personal discouragement, she states:

> I sometimes feel like I am just not making a difference. . . .You try so hard and you feel like hey, I'm not reaching the students or meeting their needs, emotionally, academically or in any way. And they're not wanting to learn. It can be really discouraging. I carry it home with me. It makes you feel down, like you can't do anything right. It creates a very negative kind of mood. My husband notices it right away. (#334)

Mrs. Cole links her feelings of professional incompetence (i.e., failure as a teacher) to her feelings of personal discouragement. She explains that when she feels like a failure at school, it affects her personal life away from school. Mrs. Cole describes an overwhelming sense of discouragement as resulting from her perceived professional incompetence. She describes the discouragement as a state of depression that follows her from school to home. She characterizes the state of depression with feelings of worthlessness, uselessness, and feelings of inability to accomplish even the smallest of personal tasks such as cooking.

Mrs. Cole also comments on the consequences of excessive and aggressive student resistant strategies on her job satisfaction. She explains, "In those instances when I'm discouraged, I wonder if it is all worth it, you know that maybe I should do something else. You feel very dissatisfied" (#325). According to Mrs. Cole's above comment, she links excessive and aggressive student resistant strategies to her sense of job dissatisfaction. She acknowledges that during those occasional times when she experiences feelings of professional incompetence and personal dissatisfaction, she often has feelings of dissatisfaction about her job. For example, she feels that the pay is too low, that the students are too lazy, that parents are unsupportive, and that the expectations (i.e., by parents, principal, and the community) for what she must accomplish in the classroom are too high.

Mrs. Cole also cites physical fatigue as a negative consequence of excessive and aggressive student resistant micropolitical strategies. According to Mrs. Cole, dealing with student resistant micropolitical strategies often creates extra work for her. She explains that student resistance results in delays and distractions in classroom instruction and learning. From the delays and distractions, valuable classroom time is lost. When classroom time is lost, Mrs. Cole has to rework her schedule and lesson plans, and often has to stay late or take work home in order to catch up or to get back on her academic schedule. The extra work, on top of an already full work day results in what Mrs. Cole terms as fatigue. She describes fatigue as physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, according to Mrs. Cole, excessive

and aggressive student resistance strategies require extra amounts of her personal energy and patience, leaving her fatigued.

Review of Student Resistance

Summary of Student Resistance Micropolitical Strategies

I find two subcategories of student micropolitical resistance toward the teacher in my data. They are passive student resistance and aggressive student resistance. Passive micropolitical strategies of resistance are less direct and less confrontational than aggressive micropolitical strategies of resistance. In addition, students participate in passive resistance more often than in aggressive resistance. I find two major reasons for this preference in my data. First, passive micropolitical strategies of resistance are generally thought by students to work effectively. Second, passive micropolitical strategies of resistance conform to student role expectancies. Students, through both past and present experiences, are socialized to behave as compliers in the classroom; therefore, students perceive passive micropolitical strategies as a more temperate and restrained way to show resistance. Passive resistance micropolitical strategies include repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, and partial compliance.

My research also reveals that students usually try passive resistance first to resist a teacher initiated activity or instruction that they dislike. If passive resistance fails to resist the teacher initiated activity or instruction, students have two choices: (1) to modify or change their goal so as to participate in the disliked activity, or (2) to use aggressive resistance micropolitical strategies. Students use aggressive resistance only in cases where they experience an intense and almost unbearable dislike of an activity.

Aggressive student micropolitical influence refers to bold and often confrontational student behavior directed at resisting a teacher initiated activity or instruction that students intensely dislike. Mrs. Cole describes such confrontations as stressful, intimidating, and potentially embarrassing for her. Unlike passive resistance, aggressive resistance involves micropolitical strategies that are much more direct and overt. Students who use aggressive micropolitical strategies are more concerned with preventing the disliked activity than with any punishments that their strategic use might cause them. Micropolitical strategies of aggressive resistance include protesting and the use of intermediaries.

Summary of Student Resistance Micropolitical Goals

According to student interviews, the students' goals for using micropolitical strategies of passive resistance (i.e., repetition, interruption, topic changes, ignoring, and partial compliance)

is to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities that students dislike. My data further reveal that students have varying and diverse reasons for disliking a particular activity. Reasons for student dislike of an activity include: a lack of comprehension of the activity, a fear of failure, a fear of peer rejection, and boredom. In other words, students often say they dislike an activity because they do not understand it, do not feel confident in succeeding in the activity, and are, therefore, afraid of possible failure of the activity. According to students, failure of an activity results in self-embarrassment and possible rejection by peers. Moreover, students say failure results in the disappointment of their parents, which often leads to parent initiated punishment. Students also mention their dislike of an activity based on their already proven attainment of the task and resulting boredom with doing a task that has little or no challenge to them.

Unlike aggressive micropolitical strategies of resistance, students who use passive micropolitical strategies of resistance take into account the possible consequences of their actions. In using passive micropolitical strategies, students attempt to prevent disliked activities without getting into much, if any, trouble. Students for the most part are not willing to risk punishment to prevent the disliked activity. Thus, in many cases, when students realize that preventing the activity is unrealistic and will cause them to get into trouble, will compromise. For example, instead of preventing the activity, students attempt to delay, distract, or somehow modify the disliked activity. Thus, while students do not completely prevent the entire activity, they delay, distract, or modify it to lessen the disliked activity's impact.

In comparison, students' interview statements reveal a similar but more inflexible student goal for using micropolitical strategies of aggressive resistance (i.e., protesting and using intermediaries). According to students, the goal of student aggressive resistance is to prevent teacher initiated activities or instruction that students intensely dislike. In aggressive resistance, students are less interested in delaying, distracting, or modifying disliked teacher initiated activities or instructions and more interested in preventing disliked teacher initiated activities or instructions. Students explain that they use aggressive resistance strategies when they feel intense dislike about an activity or instruction. This intense dislike results in students using micropolitical strategies without regard to the risks of punishment resulting from their actions. Students use aggressive micropolitical strategies rarely, but when they do, they are not interested in compromise with Mrs. Cole but rather in having their own conditions met, which means they expect Mrs. Cole to rescind a particular decision or activity.

In analyzing both of the above goals of student resistance, one culminating (i.e., inclusive of both student passive and aggressive goals) goal emerges. The culminating goal of student resistant strategies is to delay, distract, modify, or prevent teacher initiated activities and

instructions that students dislike. I used student interviews and participant observation to discover and corroborate this culminating goal.

Summary of Consequences of Student Resistant Micropolitical Strategies on the Teacher

According to Mrs. Cole, students' micropolitical strategies of resistance (i.e., both passive and aggressive resistance) are very influential on her both professionally and personally. She states that a limited amount of passive student resistance is both beneficial and expected. According to Mrs. Cole, she uses the feedback she gains from student passive resistance to help her redirect her teaching to better meet student needs.

However, Mrs. Cole says that student micropolitical strategies of resistance that are excessive, aggressive, and occur continuously have negative consequences for her. For the most part, Mrs. Cole is describing the aggressive resistant student strategies of protesting and the use of intermediaries. However, she also identifies excessive use of passive student strategies such as ignoring, topic changes, partial compliance, interruption, and repetition as having negative consequences for her. Negative consequences include feelings of professional incompetence, personal discouragement, job dissatisfaction, and fatigue.

Theoretical Propositions

My purpose in this section is to interrelate and elevate my findings, i.e., the category, subcategories, and incidents of student micropolitical resistance, to the level of a grounded, substantive theory of the micropolitics of the elementary classroom. The theory I develop from this study is substantive rather than formal. A substantive theory evolves from the study of a phenomenon positioned in one particular situational context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Similarly, the substantive micropolitical theory I derive from this study is grounded in the particular situational context of one elementary classroom. In contrast, a formal theory develops from a study of a phenomenon explored under many different types of situations (e.g., a micropolitical theory derived from a variety of situations such as various and numerous classroom grade levels, types of schools, and types of students and teachers). So, the present study is substantive in that it is situated in one particular context, namely, one second grade classroom. I present the grounded, substantive theory I developed from this context in the form of five theoretical propositions.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Blumer (1969) advocate the use of theoretical propositions as a method of expressing sociological theory. A theoretical proposition, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Blumer (1969), is a theoretical statement. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), propositions are necessary to suggest how phenomena might

possibly relate to one another. Furthermore, Blumer (1969) states that the specification of concepts and their relationships phrased in terms of propositions is necessary for the development of new areas of study. Therefore, I use the following five propositions, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Blumer (1969) for the following purposes: (1) to express a theory of the micropolitics of one elementary classroom, (2) to suggest how the research categories, subcategories, and incidents possibly relate to one another, and (3) to aid in the development of a new area of study, that of micropolitics.

I present the five propositions within three micropolitical areas that correspond to my initial guiding research questions. These areas include: (1) the selection of micropolitical strategies, (2) the goals of micropolitical strategies, and (3) the consequences of micropolitical strategies. I ground each theoretical proposition in the findings of my study. With the exception of the propositions found within the section entitled **the goals of micropolitical strategies**, it is not possible to compare my theoretical propositions to micropolitical literature. The literature is simply not available. The reason for this lack of micropolitical literature is because micropolitics is still a new and developing field of study, and as such, no studies have yet been conducted on the micropolitics of the elementary classroom. Thus, this study is the first of its kind and will provide a foundation for future studies in the area of teacher-student micropolitical relationships. I will now discuss the propositions beginning with the area entitled: The Goals of Micropolitical Strategies.

The Goals of Micropolitical Strategies

Proposition One: Students will view each issue that arises in the classroom in terms of their own goals.

Proposition Two: The greater the perceived difference between the students' and the teacher's respective goals, the greater the probability that students and the teacher will use micropolitical strategies to influence the achievement of their respective goals.

Micropolitical influence refers to the act of impacting or swaying another towards one's own goals. As evidenced in my findings and as I state in proposition one, both students and the teacher in this study are micropolitical actors with their own goals and strategies to impact or sway one another toward the achievement of their preferred goals. According to my study, micropolitical goals are the desired ends or aims pursued by students and Mrs. Cole that result from their interests, values, needs, ideologies, preferences, beliefs, motivations, and purposes. Mrs. Cole and her students view each issue that arises in the classroom in terms of their own micropolitical goals. When students perceive Mrs. Cole's goals to differ from their own, students choose and use micropolitical strategies to ensure achievement of their own goals.

Thus, when Mrs. Cole's and students' goals differ, they use micropolitical strategies in order to influence (i.e., to sway or impact) one another toward the achievement of their own preferred goals. The greater the perceived difference between Mrs. Cole's goals and students' goals, the greater the usage of micropolitical strategies in the classroom.

The micropolitical literature provides direct support for propositions one and two. Central to the micropolitical perspective is the use of strategic influence to achieve goals in organizational settings (Blase, 1991a). Furthermore, according to Bloome and Willett (1991), the concept of micropolitical influence refers to micropolitical strategies that teachers and students use in balancing contradictory goals that appear in the day-to-day interactions of the classroom. Likewise, in my study, the concept of micropolitical influence underscores the essence of day-to-day interactions between students and Mrs. Cole and refers to the use of micropolitical strategies that they use to exert influence on each other for purposes of goal achievement. According to other micropolitical literature (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1987; Bacharach & Lawler, 1980), the classroom, as an organizational setting, is shaped by the political influence that classroom members exert on each other to achieve their goals.

The Selection of Micropolitical Strategies

Proposition Three: If students dislike a teacher initiated activity, the greater the probability that students will use micropolitical strategies of resistance to avoid the activity.

Proposition Four: If students perceive their participation in the teacher activity will **not** result in student obtainment of preferred rewards, the greater the probability that students will use micropolitical strategies of resistance to avoid the activity.

Two main theoretical statements concerning students' use of resistance are revealed in propositions three and four. According to proposition three, students' micropolitical resistance strategies are the result of student dislike of a teacher initiated activity. Why students dislike an activity depends on the students' own individual interests, values, needs, preferences, beliefs, motivations, or purposes. I discovered the following five reasons for student dislike of an activity in my data: (1) students' failure to see how participation in the activity will result in the obtainment of preferred student rewards, (2) students' lack of understanding of the activity, (3) students' lack of confidence in successfully participating in the activity, (4) students' perception that the activity lacks challenge, and (5) students' fear of failure resulting from their inability to successfully participate in the activity. Students say these five reasons result in their use of micropolitical strategies of resistance.

But, as I revealed in proposition two, if students can see a way of receiving a preferred and valued reward for cooperating with a mildly disliked activity, students are likely to do so.

However, if students perceive their participation in a mildly disliked teacher activity will not result in student obtainment of preferred rewards, the greater the probability that students will use micropolitical strategies of resistance to avoid the activity.

Regardless, when students feel an intense, rather than mild, dislike for an activity, they aggressively resist the activity. Preventing the intensely disliked activity takes precedence over the students' concerns of avoiding punishment. In other words, the perceived cost of participating in the intensely disliked activity is greater than the perceived benefits to be gained by participating in the disliked activity.

Support for propositions three and four are unavailable in micropolitical literature. As previously mentioned, this is the case because there have been no studies conducted on students' micropolitical behaviors in the classroom.

The Consequences of Micropolitical Strategies

Proposition Five: The more students use and depend upon micropolitical strategies of resistance to influence the teacher, the greater the probability that the teacher will experience negative consequences.

According to Mrs. Cole, students' use of micropolitical strategies of resistance are very influential on her both professionally and personally. She states that a limited amount of passive student resistance is beneficial, expected, and positively perceived. According to Mrs. Cole, she is able to use the feedback she gains from student passive resistance to help her refocus and redirect her teaching in effort to meet student needs.

However, Mrs. Cole states that student micropolitical strategies of resistance that she perceives to be excessive, aggressive, and to occur continuously have negative consequences for her. Thus, the more students use micropolitical strategies of resistance, the greater the probability that Mrs. Cole will experience negative consequences. Negative consequences for Mrs. Cole include a self-perception of professional incompetence, job dissatisfaction, and personal discouragement and fatigue.

No published micropolitical data exists, to date, that explores the consequences of student micropolitical classroom influence on the teacher. Thus, support for proposition five is unavailable in micropolitical literature.

Implications

The micropolitical perspective has implications for university educational programs, and preservice and inservice teachers and principals. According to Blase (in press), micropolitical

knowledge and skills are relevant to understanding, working in, and changing the character of life in schools. Blase (1991a) explains:

> The micropolitical perspective on organization provides a valuable and potent approach to understanding the woof and warp of the fabric of day-to-day life in schools. This perspective highlights the fundamentals of human behavior and purpose. Micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends. It is about what people in all social settings think about and have strong feelings about, but what is so often unspoken and not easily observed. (p. 1)

As revealed in the above quote, Blase makes reference to several implications of micropolitical knowledge and skills for all educators, including teachers, principals, and university educators. First, the micropolitical perspective is valuable for understanding school life--understanding why individuals in schools, whether it be teachers, students, principals, or parents, behave as they do. Understanding why individuals act as they do must preclude any action taken to modify or change their actions. Second, according to Blase (1991a), micropolitical knowledge and skills are important for proactive influence purposes, to help individuals influence others so as to achieve their own goals and purposes. On the other hand, micropolitical knowledge and skills can also be used to help individuals react to, prevent, or counter negative types of influence. Third, micropolitical knowledge and skills will help school and university members develop shared goals and to build cooperative support needed for the achievement of shared goals that will ultimately lead to the improvement of education.

While the above micropolitical implications are broad and general in nature, I will now outline specific recommendations for micropolitical use based on my present study. In the following section, I discuss micropolitical recommendations for teachers and university education programs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Teachers

1. Teachers should be prepared to operate effectively in a dynamic and highly micropolitical world of the classroom.

Teachers should be prepared (i.e., skilled) to deal with classroom influence in two different ways. First, teachers should be prepared to operate reactively, as targets of classroom influence. Teachers should be aware of potential and actual types of influence strategies that students use in the classroom. Teachers should also be skilled in responding to student influence

strategies in appropriate ways, taking into account the situational context of the classroom and the individuality of each student. Second, teachers should be prepared to operate proactively, as initiators of classroom influence. Teachers should be aware of the types of influence strategies they use and how those strategies are perceived by individual students. Furthermore, teachers should always be conscious of the consequences of their influence strategies on students.

2. Teachers should seek to understand students from a micropolitical standpoint.

Teachers should make an effort to not only assess the micropolitical strategies of students, but to seek the purposes or goals of others' micropolitical strategies. Thus, in the context of the present study, Mrs. Cole should seek to understand why her students use micropolitical strategies of resistance.

For example, a student resistant strategy could be considered a symptom of an underlying problem of student and teacher goal incompatibility. In other words, the student is resisting Mrs. Cole's activity because that activity is incompatible with the students' goal. If Mrs. Cole addresses only the symptom, (i.e., the student's strategy of resistance), without recognizing the underlying goal or purpose of the strategy, the goal or purpose of the student resistance will never be discovered and the incompatibility never resolved. In this case, it is likely that the student strategy of resistance will be met with a counter strategy of resistance by Mrs. Cole, and thus a vicious cycle is born of strategy and counter strategy between the student and Mrs. Cole. This cycle has little potential for achieving positive consequences for either Mrs. Cole or her students. Teachers must learn to get to the heart of the student resistance and treat the cause of student resistance and not just the symptoms. Teachers must also realize that when teacher and students' goals and strategies are incongruent, a climate is created that prevents both teacher and student from reaping the benefits of classroom success.

3. Teachers should also be aware of how their actions reinforce certain student micropolitical behaviors.

For example, teachers should be careful not to be more accepting of students' use of passive types of micropolitical resistance as opposed to aggressive resistance. While, it may be initially less stressful and time consuming for teachers to allow students to participate in passive resistance such as partial compliance or ignoring as opposed to aggressive and confrontational resistance such as protesting and using intermediaries, the subsequent management problems associated with this type of acceptance are likely to be even more troublesome and demanding in the long term. Teachers should encourage students to verbalize the reasons behind their resistance, even if such encounters make both students and teacher uneasy. This type of candor

is likely to expose the actual reasons for the resistance and promote more cooperative classroom opportunities that contribute to further classroom success.

4. Teachers should develop a deep awareness of their own political strategies and goals, and how their strategies and goals affect students and influences important classroom processes, such as teaching and learning.

Although micropolitical influence is necessary to accomplish various goal-oriented teaching and learning outcomes, the teacher must never forget to consider the effects of his or her influence, not only on the successful achievement of his or her goal, but also on the students involved.

For instance, teachers should develop an awareness of when and how to use micropolitical influence strategies to achieve teaching and learning outcomes. And, in order to know how to use influence effectively, the teacher must know her students, their needs, and their goals.

Special efforts should also be taken by teachers to determine how their micropolitical influence may unconsciously and inadvertently affect students. For instance, teachers should take time to reflect on their own micropolitical behaviors to determine how these behaviors are being interpreted by students (i.e., based on conversations with students), and to solicit feedback from students about the consequences of teacher strategies.

5. Teachers must be aware of their micropolitical example to students.

Teachers have a moral and ethical responsibility to use appropriate means of influence in the classroom. My study finds that students often rely on influence strategies that they have previously seen used by others or that they have previously been the recipients of. Thus, it is possible that students learn micropolitical influence through the examples and experiences they have in the classroom. As such, teachers must be aware of how their micropolitical behavior is recreated in the lives of students. As the saying goes, "Children learn what they live."

Recommendations for University Education Programs

1. University education programs should provide opportunities for teachers, both preservice and inservice, to develop micropolitical knowledge.

University programs should provide opportunities for teachers to develop the following types of micropolitical knowledge: (1) an awareness and understanding of the impact that micropolitical behavior has on schools, (2) how to identify and respond appropriately to the

types of micropolitical influence being used in schools, and (3) to develop an awareness of one's own micropolitical behavior.

Opportunities to develop micropolitical knowledge could be accomplished in two ways. First, micropolitical knowledge could be developed by adding courses on the micropolitical perspective to the existing university academic course curriculum in both teacher education and principal education programs. Next, micropolitical knowledge could be developed by integrating micropolitical research holistically into already existing university courses, to include such topics as conflict resolution, negotiation, group dynamics, classroom management, motivation, decision making, organizational change, organizational leadership, supervision, communication, resource allocation, and public relations.

2. Opportunities should be provided to allow current and prospective teachers to confront their own micropolitical behavior and analyze the consequences of their micropolitical behavior on others.

The confrontation and analysis of micropolitical behavior could be accomplished through group discussions, role playing, sensitivity training, mentoring, information gained as both producers and consumers of research, and through simulated experiences. Simulated experiences, for example, could include the use of multimedia technology such as the Administrator Case Simulation Library produced at Texas Tech University (Claudet, 1994). The Case Simulation Library depicts educational scenarios presented on an interactive video laser disk format (i.e., a framing and analysis format). In regard to micropolitics, preservice and inservice educators could be presented with a school scenario depicting a micropolitical dilemma. Educators could analyze the dilemma and then further reflect and identify how they would respond to the dilemma. In this way, educators could confront their own micropolitical behavior. Moreover, educators could then discuss and reflect upon the potential consequences of their micropolitical behavior on the life of the school.

3. An educational agenda that attempts to enhance a reflective orientation toward the development of and use of micropolitical influence competencies would be useful.

Schon (1983) describes the reflective orientation process as consisting of two parts: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. For instance, in the complex and dynamic life of schools and classrooms, events unfold rapidly and new problems continually arise. When faced with a new problem or situation, educators must use reflection-in-action by drawing upon knowledge gained from theory and research as well as knowledge acquired through experience in order to appropriately respond to the new problem or situation. Once the action has been taken, educators must then reflect-on-action by examining the consequences of their actions. The

information educators gain from reflection-on-action can then be used when faced with the next new problem or situation.

For example, when using micropolitical influence in the classroom, teachers must, as Schon (1983) says, reflect-in-action. For instance, before using a micropolitical strategy, the teacher may ask herself or himself several reflective questions such as: Will this micropolitical strategy be perceived by students as supportive and result in positive consequences for students?, or Will this micropolitical strategy be resisted by students and result in negative consequences for students? The teacher will then select a micropolitical strategy based on this reflection-in-action. Utilizing and understanding reflection-in-action is essential because each classroom and each student presents a unique classroom context. In other words, no how-to book can tell a teacher how to use micropolitical strategies in particular situations because it cannot tell the teacher what the political dynamics of the situation are.

Subsequently, teacher action (i.e., in the form of a micropolitical strategy), once taken, must then undergo further reflection. Schon (1983) calls this reflection-on-action. Reflection-on-action is used to determine the results of the teacher's action, in this case, the consequences of the teacher's micropolitical strategy. The results of this reflection-on-action will then be used the next time the need for reflection-in-action occurs.

Thus, reflection is a two part process. Part one, reflection-in-action, consists of identifying or framing the problem, mentally drawing on the knowledge gained from theory, research, and past experiences, and, at the same time, activating solutions. Part two, reflection-on-action, consists of analyzing the consequences of the action taken. A university education agenda that attempts to enhance teachers' understandings and uses of both types of reflection would be beneficial toward the development of and use of micropolitical influence.

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